principle, according to Tocqueville and his teacher in these matters, Rousseau, is *the* principle of justice and the foundation of the only legitimate form of political regime, democracy. The true knowledge of equality and its incorporation in the real lives of human beings are modern phenomena, and the early thinkers who provided the intellectual foundations of democracy reflected profoundly on the meaning and the consequences of this one political absolute.

At the origins, equality was understood to be the principle of nature as opposed to the conventional order in which some men ruled others by pretended right of strength, wealth, tradition, or age. The relations of king and subject, master and slave, lord and vassal, patrician and pleb, rich and poor, were revealed to be purely manmade and hence not morally binding apart from the consent of the parties to them. Civil society was to be reconstructed on the natural ground of its members' common humanity. Consent became the only source of political legitimacy. It would appear from this perspective that all relationships or relatedness depend on the free consent of individuals. Inevitably, political right and the understanding of nature connected with it affected the view of relationships within civil society which are less doubtfully natural and less arguably conventional than those just mentioned, that is, those between man and woman, parent and child. They cannot be interpreted simply as the result of acts of human freedom and seem to constrain that freedom. If they are natural absolutes, they seem to give witness against the free arrangements of consent dominant in the political order. But if they are to be understood as are other contractual relationships, they lose their character and dissolve. It is difficult to argue that nature does and does not prescribe relatedness at one and the same time. The radical transformation of the relations between men and women and parents and children was the inevitable consequence of the success of the new political dispensation. In just what way they would be transformed and what the reflexive effect of the transformation on the political order would be became Rousseau's central concerns. He presented the issue as the core of a crisis of modernity and democracy.

Prior to Rousseau, it might be said with some exaggeration, the teachers of equality paid little attention to men and women and the family. They concentrated on the political order and seemed to suppose that the subpolitical units would remain largely unaffected. But there are two different understandings of nature present here, one in which nature has nothing to say about relationships and rank order and another in which nature is prescriptive. Are the relations between men and women and parents and children determined by natural impulse or are they the products of choice and consent? The former view is part and parcel of ancient political philosophy, as one easily sees in Aristotle's *Politics* I, whereas the latter view is at least implicit in Hobbes's and Locke's state of nature. The common teaching of the political philosophers has always been that the political regime will inform its parts. Hence democratic politics will produce democratic sexual and family relations. But what are they?

In *Emile* Rousseau addressed this question more comprehensively than anyone had done before or has done since, and it is to a few reflections on this enormously influential but now largely forgotten book that I shall limit myself, in the belief that Rousseau, because of his privileged position at the beginnings of modern democracy, saw the problems with special clarity and intransigence, and that, however unpalatable his views have since become, he both played an important and unsuspected part in forming our views and is especially helpful if one wishes to get a perspective on our peculiar form of wishful thinking.

II

To begin where we are at, the moral and perhaps even the political scene has been dominated for two decades by two movements, sexual liberation and feminism. Both have somehow to do with the status of sexual differentiation or ''roles,'' and both are explicitly connected with the extension and radicalization of egalitarianism. The two are not necessarily harmonious—witness the squabbles over pornography—but each probably presupposes the other, and they represent aspects of the struggle to adjust free individuality to the demands of our sexual nature. Rousseau foresaw both as necessary consequences of liberal theory and practice and was strongly against them. His reasons for this stance are of little concern to his contemporary critics who are committed to liberation and feminism, and he is now probably the archvillain of sexual politics. He is qualified as a guilt-ridden puritan by one camp and as a sexist by the other, and is subjected to the indignities of psychological interpretation. His continuing good reputation in other quarters is attributable to his powerful advocacy of community, which is all the rage. But that his treatment of sex can be explained only by his concern for the conditions of community—conditions that were, according to him, rapidly disappearing—is hardly mentioned. Rousseau's dedication to the cause of close communitarian ties between free and equal men and women forced him to pay the closest attention to that most powerful motive, sex, which joins and separates men and women.

Puritan he surely was not. He was one of the most powerful critics of the notion of original sin, and insisted on the natural goodness of man, especially of his sexual desire. It is a common error to treat opponents of sexual liberation as though their only ground were theological, whereas it is possible to limit sexual gratification for economic, social, and political reasons and even in the name of good sex or love. Rousseau wished to liberate sex from its theological yoke in order to consider its delicate relationship to all the powers of the soul. If sexism means insistence on essential differentiation of function between man and woman both naturally and socially, then Rousseau was indeed a sexist. If, on the other hand, it means treating women as objects and subordinating them, he certainly was not a sexist. Rather he was concerned with enhancing the power of women over men. Beginning from the community of man and woman in the act of procreation, he attempts to extend it throughout the whole of life. Procreation is not incidental to life but, properly elaborated, is the end, that for the sake of which all things are done. It is the relatedness, the harmonious relatedness of man and woman, which he takes as the model and foundation of all human relatedness.

Because modern political theory and practice begin from the rights of individuals "to life, liberty, and the pursuit of property," the dangers of egoism (read "narcissism" today), of a constricting of the soul within the limits of the individual and material I, and hence of a diminution of man, are, according to Rousseau, great. Liberal democracy, unless its characteristic springs of action are complemented or sublimated, would not then be a simply choiceworthy regime, even though it were founded on just principles. Rousseau discerned in man's historical experience three great loves that could draw him out of his selfish concerns and solicit his soul on the highest level—love of God, love of country, love of woman. Each is an enthusiasm, even a fanaticism, the objects of which are made unique and beyond purchase by the activity of imagination. The operations of the first two have been rendered nugatory, or at least have been radically attenuated, by modern philosophy itself, which had as one of its primary goals the destruction of fanaticism. Tocqueville summarizes Rousseau's observations about patriotism and religion in an egalitarian age: Attachment to country is a calculated judgment, not a passion, and religion is largely a moral teaching intended to put a damper on materialism. Neither has the character of an end in itself or a consummation, the proper domain of the noble or the heroic. Religious authority is undermined by reason, and government becomes the protector of private rights, not the school of public virtue. Fanaticism is, Rousseau and Tocqueville agree, a cruel and sanguinary disposition, an enemy of reason and of peace. But it is also frequently the cause of a self-forgetting and dedication absent in preservative and economic motives. It displays generosity and splendor. It is possessed of a poetic charm not present in dreary commercialism. The immediate consequence seen by Rousseau is that the love between man and woman must be preserved and encouraged, for it is the politically undangerous fanaticism that ennobles human beings and can, by way of the family, even strengthen the political order. It can be thought to be natural and healthy in a fuller sense than the other two, because it has a bodily base and a bodily fulfillment in sex. The further consequence is that sexual liberation, as opposed to religious and political liberation, must be combated in order to avoid the demystification of love, as God and country have been demystified. As faith had become superstition and fatherland the state, so love would become sex, and there would be nothing left to oppose the atomizing tendencies of egalitarianism. Love means the directedness of the two sexes to one another and their complementarity, so that a true unity can be achieved instead of the contractual and conditional connection of two like and selfish individuals.

As a consequence of such reflections, Rousseau put eroticism at the center of his thought, and these reflections provide the answer to the question of the unity of his writings, which appear to be divided between public and private, political and romantic works. The defectiveness of politics requires the supplement of love, and eros as the proper realm of imagination, idealism, and beauty reveals itself only by the demystification of the theological and political realms. What at first glance seems to be a disaster—the coming into being of that which Rousseau was the first to call "bourgeois" society—turns out to provide the opportunity to gain clarity on the human situation and to separate out its elements so that they may be harmoniously reordered. Thus the new political science, which was intended to be self-sufficient, was father to a new science of morals and a new aesthetics—noble interpretations of equality and freedom—providing for the full development of the human faculties. The sentimentality, romanticism, and idealism of Rousseau, which so infuriate latter-day Enlightenment rationalists and seem so far from the coolness and sobriety of Locke, are merely the result of thinking Locke through, especially the latter's comparative neglect or downplaying of sex and imagination. They must be given their due for the sake of preserving the political order and avoiding the impoverishment of man.

Hence Rousseau's novelistic works, *Emile, La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and *Confessions*—each of which is much longer than his primary political treatises, the two *Discourses* and the *Social Contract*, put together—constitute an attempt to establish what was missing in earlier democratic thinkers, a democratic art. He does for democracy what Socrates did for aristocracy in the *Republic*. The artistic need—which Rousseau understood to be related to the religious need—was unsatisfied in liberalism, with the attendant risk of either philistinism or the persistence of the influence of artistic forms and models drawn from the old tradition—biblical or Plutarchian—inappropriate to democratic life. Democracy requires democratic taste, for taste, much more than abstract principle, determines way of life and choice of pleasures and pains. There is the closest of links between taste and morals. In his *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theater* Rousseau criticizes the aristocratic and urban character of the theater as well as its bloated heroes, whose example has nothing to do with the lives democratic men lead. The novel, in the establishment of which as *the* literary form in an egalitarian age Rousseau played a leading part, is better suited to democratic men. It is cheap and accessible everywhere, does not presuppose extensive and fixed periods of leisure, does not require participation in a public ritual where wealth and rank are on display, and is therefore not as necessarily allied with vanity and snobbism. Its personages can be people more like ourselves. The tedium of the daily life of democratic man, with its lack of splendid actions, can more appropriately find its place in a novel, and the cultivation of the private life and private sentiments are more satisfactorily depicted in it than on the stage. The joys of rusticity, the presence of nature, and the attachments of family belong especially to the novel. Good novels can be the constant, life-interpreting companions of men and women in regimes where communal sharing in the sublime has all but disappeared.

And the central theme of Rousseau's novels is the relations between men and women—love, marriage, children. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is the archetype of the romantic novel; and *Emile*, the prototype of the *Bildungsroman*, is nothing but the education of a husband. One does not often imagine that the thoughts of Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and Hume were primarily occupied with sexual relations. Rousseau was the first of the modern philosophers to return to Plato's concern with eros. And the connection between this concern and art is evident. The love of the beautiful unites them. The early modern thinkers put their emphasis on fear of death as the fundamental motivation, and it is an individuating passion as well as one that looks to the ugliness of man's situation. The coupling passion becomes secondary if the passion that isolates the self is more powerful. The world that is devoted to avoiding death or providing comfortable preservation is prosaic. Rousseau was attempting to restore the Platonic eros for the beautiful on new grounds and, if not to render the world poetic again, at least to embellish its prose. The sexual fantasy and the perfect partner that it envisages is the natural base from which he begins.

Thus, when Tocqueville says that American women are the cause of the American success, he means that the attachments to them formed by American men were of the kind that would support American institutions. These were strong, austere, and modest women who did not flinch from the life of pioneers, who did not demand great luxuries, and who practiced and demanded fidelity in marriage and were dedicated to their children. They were, at least in Tocqueville's interpretation, the principle of the family, which gave men a goal beyond their individual selves, which involved their daily thoughts and feelings, an end for the sake of which their hard labors were performed. The family is a unit intermediate between individual and society and provides a link between them. America was a nation of families—perhaps themselves composed of individuals, but individuals whose *choice* of family gave them interests, in both senses of the word, different from those of raw individuals. This is so simply because in the family the self is passionately expanded in space and time. The family man must care in an unconditional way for other individuals as well as himself, and he has an inevitable commitment to the future extending beyond his own life. Wife and children are not the only possible motives of such spiritual expansiveness. But in an egalitarian society the others (Tocqueville suggests that among them are politics, religion, art, and philosophy) are not readily available, nor are they so natural, gentle, or easy. The political order that serves families is very different from the one that serves individuals, if the latter is even possible. When the society is not an educator of citizens, the family can at least provide persons who are open to the demands of the large community because they care for a small community that is their own. It is thus the directedness of a man's sexual desire to a woman of a certain kind that is the foundation of the family. Tocqueville accepts Rousseau's maxim, which Rousseau took from Plato, ''Do you want to know men? Study women.'' In every nation they have reciprocal characters, and there is no political solution unless there is a sexual solution.

III

Men and women have to adapt themselves to one another because they must get sexual satisfaction and civilized human beings want willing partners. Traditionally, since it was women who put up the resistance and had to approve those who were attracted to them, men had to do and be what was necessary to gain a woman's consent. If women were promiscuous and lived in the atmosphere of a court, a man had to be of a different kind to succeed with them from the one who would appeal to chaste women desirous of a rustic and domestic life. The inner difference here can be measured by the distance between seduction and courtship. Whatever a man's public responsibilities or work, a large part of his most intimate private life, taste, and fantasy is involved with his sexual relations (unless sex is trivialized and made meaningless) and the demands his partners make on his character. If the two sides of his life do not cohere, both public and private suffer and regimes change. The private pleasures win out in the long run. Plato suggested that the austere, public-spirited Spartans secretly longed for voluptuous sexual satisfactions to which their lascivious women tempted them. Therefore Spartan virtue was forced and founded on repression rather than on love of virtue. The almost impossible task of harmonizing the public demands on the male warriors with what their attractions to women inclined them toward led Plato, or rather his Socrates in the *Republic*, to innovate and give women the same education and the same work as men. All the elements of liberation with which we are so familiar are found there—day-care centers, birth control, abortion, equal access to athletic facilities, along with less familiar items such as infanticide and nudity in common exercises. Sexual differentiation disappears and has no more significance than does the difference between the bald and the hairy. But this is done not in the name of women's rights but of what is needful for the community. Socrates simply abolishes women, and hence the division of labor between men and women which does not match the city's economic and political division of labor. The private pleasures and the private family to which the difference between the sexes point cannot be conciliated with full community or communism. In Socrates' city what unites human beings of either sex is the overriding common good and nothing less. Reproduction becomes an incidental aspect of life, one that does not affect its goals, and education of the young is entirely public. There is left no tension between public and private. Women represent privacy, in pleasure, property, and family. They have to be separated from their children if all children are to be treated equally.

Rousseau's analysis begins from Plato. He does not dispute the desirability of total dedication to and involvement with the community. Morality means self-overcoming in favor of the common good. His disagreement with Plato is about the natural desirability of the political order. Men care naturally about themselves in the first place, and Spartan civic virtue requires a ''denaturing'' of man both difficult to achieve and harsh on individuals. National attachment is both fanatic and abstract; there is no natural impulse toward the large community, which requires myths—that is, lies—to be believable and the rewards of which are honor and glory, imaginary and dangerous will-o'-the-wisps. Such a city is achieved at the cost of the sweetest natural pleasures—erotic satisfactions—and their associated natural sentiments, love of men and women for one another and love of children. The differences between the two kinds of relatedness is measured by the contrast between the overwhelming and also questionable passions of Plutarch's heroes, which make them capable of their political sacrifices, and the gentler, more common, and more effective motives for sacrifices on the part of men and women in love, and parents, the persons depicted in Tolstoy's novels, for example. Rousseau puts family where Plato put city, as the end for which other things are done and as the ground of relationships, partly because he lowered standards and expectations, partly because he saw in the former greater humanity.

If Plato's civil promiscuity, the completely utilitarian treatment of sexual intercourse, were to persist when the city was no longer the highest goal for its citizens, total individualism would result. What was done away with for the sake of the city was what was necessary for the family. A rational division of labor that does not take account of sex is possible. The separation of men and women and the psychological inhibitions that went with it hampered such a rational division of labor. Male and female went the way of aristocrat and commoner, native-born and foreign-born, and so on as a distinction that is not pertinent to the jobs to be done. But what determines the jobs to be done now? The market. A person must make himself over to fit whatever jobs are created by the impersonal forces of the market. No longer is the adaptation arguably to natural requirements, such as those of the city or the family. Ruler, warrior, and priest can be said to perform functions always politically necessary and even fulfillments of human potential, as is also the case of mother and father in the family. But riveter or computer programmer are just jobs, related to what is produced, not to the fulfillment of the human potential. Thus the individual is utterly alienated to the market and its ever-changing demands, his or her existence defined by it. And it is pure, anonymous, becoming. These observations of Rousseau form the kernel of Marx's critique of capitalism and its effect on the family. Man, woman, and child are categories that impede the growth of capital. Capitalism is interested only in workers, and feminism is but bourgeois ideology that rationalizes turning women into workers. At the same time Rousseau insists that these persons, working at jobs sexlessly, are utterly selfish, concerned only with money and the esteem accorded them, materialistic and vain. They have nothing to respect outside themselves, and their selves are undefinable, just masses of desires. Rousseau describes the bourgeois as a being concerned only with him- or her- or itself, for want of anything else real or compelling to be concerned about (in spite of financing a huge cultural establishment with which the bourgeois tries to persuade himself and others that he has higher concerns), while his self is a product of what others, or "the system," want it to be.

The family, in Rousseau's view, can be defended only if both men and women believe that it is the highest enterprise, more complete and more fulfilling than any career. The belief that being in love is very high and very important is not too difficult to encourage (although easy sex can deflate it). Against the background of love, the vocations tend to pale and appear as at best necessities. In love men and women do care for another, perhaps as much as they care for themselves. This care comes from within; it has a powerful bodily root and is clearly not a product of others' opinions. The difficulty is to extend this passion throughout a lifetime, to keep it singular as it necessarily is at its inception, and to make it culminate in the care of children. This requires education, morality, literature, and reasoning. Persuasion, which is not as powerful as love but in which certain human passions do cooperate—such as love of one's own and longing for immortality—can sometimes convince men and women that raising and educating children is a nobler activity than being a lawyer or a banker, so that those whose family responsibilities exclude them from such professions will not feel that they are maimed by the drudgery of domestic life. These two prerequisites—love of a sexual partner and involvement with children—together can contribute a substantial common good that solicits the individual members of the partnership. This is the only common good of which, according to Rousseau, we know by nature and which is available to us modern men. All other collectivities are the result of force or the contingent private interests of individuals. To put it otherwise, earlier contract teachings provided only a negative motive for abandoning natural individual freedom to enter society—fear of death. Love provides a private motive, and one that does not treat other human beings as means but as ends in themselves. Sex is the only social, or sociable, impulse in man. All other natural impulses leave him isolated, even in the midst of his fellows.

Given the primacy of the family, finally to come to the point, the division of labor between man and woman, their different functions with respect to, and different contributions to, the common good become manifest again. The bodily difference is decisive here. The woman bears the children and nurses them. All the other differences are but corollaries of this first, bodily difference. All that is intolerable to contemporary sensibilities about Rousseau is connected with this point. He asserts that the difference between men and women is natural and that liberation from natural destiny, although surely possible, takes away all gravity from the beings thus liberated. And it is not his fault, Rousseau insists, that nature imposes very special responsibilities on a woman.

In sexual union a woman has two considerations—pleasure and the possibility of pregnancy—whereas a man has only one. Like it or not, the sexual act has far-reaching consequences for her which it does not have for a man. Naturally, without the mediation of law or education, she must make do for herself and for her child. Whatever help she gets comes from the free choice of others, whereas she is constrained by natural necessity. Very simply, it is up to her to constitute the family and hold it together. She must be the one who keeps the man and makes him into a father. Law, once constituted and enforced, can help her, but law will be effective only when it is supported by the inclinations. When men no longer wish to remain with women, they will abandon them and their children. This is still the case even today, when, with the burgeoning divorce rate and enlightenment about men's responsibilities, 90 percent of children remain with their mothers when the parents separate. And this is no accident, as Rousseau sees it, for women have a natural tie to children. They bear them, they nurse them, they are certain they are theirs, and they seem to have an instinctive attachment to children, even to the point of risking their lives for their sake. This is the only natural social bond Rousseau is able to discern. Men will die for their countries or for the women they love, but this sacrifice is not natural or instinctive. It is the product of education and imagination. Naturally men do not have a country and women are not loved in any way other than as means of bodily gratification. At the real foundations, the sole impulse of sociality is that of mother toward child, and all the other seminatural and healthy kinds of sociality cluster around this one. The unit composed of mother and child is the building block out of which society can be constructed. Otherwise only individual self-interest—which means, practically, fear or gain—remains to motivate human beings. The mother's sentiments are the only example we have of unambiguously selfless ones, and these sentiments must be made use of if society is to have an admixture of real concern for others as ends in themselves. In short, women are the link between fathers and children. They are involved with both, and by way of the father's involvement with and faith in the mother, he can become attached to the children, because he loves the mother and because he believes the children are his. Thus the women are the principle of sociality, and it is their responsibility to bring the elements together. Love and motherhood are their domain.

As a result of these reflections Rousseau presents his disagreement with Plato (a disagreement founded on reverence for a great teacher) as one concerning women's modesty. In his total reform of society Socrates begins from an attack on modesty as a mere Greek prejudice. He makes the women in his city strip and exercise naked with the men. Modesty is for Socrates the moving force in the sexual relatedness of men and women, and the removal of the veil it provides takes away the specifically sexual power women have over men. Once this power has been removed, all can look to the city alone as the source of fraternity. The city is de-eroticized in this way. Sexual need can be handled clinically, rationally, in a way most conducive to the utility of the public. Rousseau does not disagree with this analysis. He only argues that the demystification of modesty is not good, that the passionate, erotic relations between male and female are salutary. The understanding of modesty's function is the same for both thinkers. Modesty is both a woman's means of restraining her sexual desire in order to be sure that her children have a father and her means of involving a man with her. Making the assent of her will to his advances important to him is the way sex becomes love, the desire of another's desire. Woman's modesty keeps a man in doubt and makes him believe that he must prove his qualities to her. Modesty is protean. It can be mere coquetry, which forces a man to go through a charade in order to get what he wants, and it can be virtue, yielding only to virtue that is prepared to devote itself to her and to their children. Modesty can inform sexual desire with morality, making it find its satisfaction at least partially in the belief that love is the reward of virtue. It is the source of mystery and romantic illusion in the interplay between the sexes, and the only inner force opposing utilitarianism. In sum, women by the skillful use of modesty civilize men. That ancient but now unknown custom called courtship was one of the means of enslaving men to women's rule. Men were the ones who willed, but they had to learn to will what women want. In Book V of *Emile* Rousseau presents a little handbook for courtship, outlining the qualities that a man must prove he possesses to his beloved. Only when he has been tested should his suit be accepted by the beloved. She becomes his judge, and he accepts her judgment because he believes that she really wants a good man and knows one when she sees him. His belief in her motivates him to be the kind of man she wants, and Rousseau teaches that this ideal vision of a woman's character is the most potent and natural motive of higher action, one with fewer dangerous consequences than political glory or religious fanaticism, one that has the solid result of procreating the species along with the responsible rearing of children to be good persons and good citizens. A career woman with essentially the same ends as a man could not produce such effects on him, nor would their partnership be more than a business partnership with the ends of each beyond and outside of it. Only if the children are the end can the parents at least in principle be united and the wife in particular avoid being split between her life goals and what she owes to her children.

This interconnectedness of men and women is well illustrated by the theme of male protectiveness. In the *Republic* the class in which the sameness of men and women is instituted consists primarily of warriors. What the same treatment of males and females comes down to in this case is that a man should have no more compunction about sticking a sword through a female than a male in an opposing army and that he should react no differently to the danger or wounds of a female comrade in arms than those of a male. To do so would hamper the rational effectiveness of the soldiers, all just soldiers. Rousseau argues that it is precisely owing to sentiments of social respect for and duty toward women that men become gentle, humane, civil, and responsible to others. The fact that women need protection and men feel they owe it to them is a powerful form of relatedness. Take such sentiments away, by persuading men that they should not feel them or by making women independent, and what takes their place in human relatedness? If the gentlemen on the *Titanic* do not believe that ladies, deserving special consideration, should be the first to leave the ship, then it is every person for him- or herself. The untrustworthiness of protectiveness, or of men in general, does not constitute a refutation of Rousseau. If men sometimes do behave like gentlemen, it is morally good for them to do so and beneficial to women, particularly if nothing else adequately protects them. It is the mutual dependence of men and women that ties them together. If women do not need men, and men are emotionally and legally able to avoid responsibilities that are always painful and are now made utterly unattractive, men and women will always be psychologically ready for separation and will separate at the first difficulty. A man betrayed and a woman abandoned have always been particularly pitiable, but a world in which neither can happen because neither party really needs or cares for the other would be an abomination of isolation and separateness.

IV

Rousseau's romantic prescriptions may appear to modern eyes to be merely a reaffirmation of age-old sex "roles," but he actually is engaged in a revolutionary reconstitution of the relation between the sexes in the light of the new science of man. Against the background of the abstractness of individual rights, he tries to introduce a sentiment of—not a reasoning about—naturalness which provides real guidance in life. The goodness of nature and its permanence, as opposed to the artificiality of the life created by the conquest of nature with its quest for power after power without being able to generate goals for the attainment of which that power is to be used, is Rousseau's theme, and it has enjoyed an enduring success in back-to-nature and environmentalist movements. It is only the highest expression of that theme, back to the nature of man and woman, which has evoked a negative response in recent times. Rousseau introduced feeling as the counterpoise to calculating reason, which discards such considerations if they do not contribute to economic benefit. In his thought, love of the country tempers conquest of nature, compassion tempers exploitation of men, and eros tempers selfishness or individualism. Recognition and rediscovery of feeling, letting it act as the first principle of action, reconstitutes the world of meaning which modern science and philosophy has dissolved. Thus Rousseau's treatment of love and marriage concentrates not on the rational ordering of the household and the appropriateness of the partners for their common business but on the inclination of the man and woman for one another. If one reads Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, or Cicero on marriage, one finds hardly a word about the sexual attraction of the partners. Marriage is for them a civil institution, and the appropriateness of the man and the woman to one another or to the duties of married life has little to do with whether they arouse one another very much physically. Erotic love and marriage are not very good partners, for the former is arbitrary, untamable, unpredictable, unreasonable, antinomian, and above all unstable. These thinkers talk about duties, not above love. Rousseau, on the other hand, holds that duty can be derived only from prior inclination; the ends of marriage flow from the beginnings in passion. Without such beginnings, there is no substance, no inner vitality in the institution. Love is the root that provides the life to the plant. Without nourishment from it, the plant cannot flourish and grow. The delicate structure of Rousseau's erotic teaching is meant to found the family in all its ramifications without the imposition of alien and alienating law. As the modern state was intended to derive all its force and functions from the primary, natural passion of fear, so Rousseau attempted to found a new kind of family corresponding to and corrective of that state, deriving its force and functions from the sexual passion. Natural freedom comes first; duty is derivative and is assented to in order to exercise the freedom effectively. And just as Rousseau's predecessors, Hobbes and Locke, had to remind their readers that, with conventions stripped away, fear and the quest for well-being are natural and powerful, so Rousseau had to remind his readers that sex is natural, attractive, and good. Hobbes and Locke adopted a powerful rhetoric about the unattractive character of the state of nature to reconcile men to the civil state. Rousseau founds a rhetoric about eros to attract men and women to the married state. He is the first philosopher to collaborate with the illusions of love, because they produce a more sublime sense of duty than do the realities of the modern state. This is another perspective on why Rousseau had to write novels. The game of love takes on social and political significance, and men and women must recover their capacity to feel. Nature recaptured gives witness to the sexual attraction of men and women to each other and their mutual differences in possible unity. Sex, far from being sinful, is one of the tiny number of truly natural rights. Actually

Rousseau's concentration on the right of following sexual feeling has been adopted by almost everyone, even though his elaboration on its concomitant duties has been rejected.

Rousseau's central reform in the relation between the sexes is an attempt to conciliate nature and freedom by giving women the absolute right to choose their husbands, emancipating them from the authority of their parents. Tocqueville understood this to be the primary fact in the success of American marriage. A woman looks at her suitors and what they offer and freely accepts one or the other or even decides to remain single. This is her way of joining her hopes of sexual gratification and happiness with her responsibility to her children. It is a choice with grave consequences, hence a real choice. Natural necessity weighs on her, but she can inform it with her will and her judgment, and she can test and educate her husband. Thus consent, the only modern principle of legitimacy, is the ground of marriage. It is consent cooperating with natural desire satisfied and controlled by an act of the will. A man, too, must be responsible and willing, but the consequences are so much greater for the woman and her connection with the children so much more inevitable that her choice is the fundamental deed. The man must desire her, perhaps with an idealized and moralized desire, but she must decide about him, no matter how her desire inclines her. She decides whether she can hope to make him care for her and her children, and a large part of this hope is founded on her assurance that she is the moral being who bestows her sexual favors only on the virtuous and who will assuredly make her husband the father of her children. This means that once she has made her choice, it must be absolute or unconditional. She will stick by her promise no matter what, for it is in large measure a promise made to herself and is the source of her self-esteem. Pragmatism can play no role here. She cannot say to herself, "I am a strong and moral being if my partner is; otherwise I follow my lusts," any more than a patriot can say that he will stick by his country as long as it wins. She is the law against which the man's conduct is measured. A woman who has chosen her lot is not just a plaything of authority. She finds dignity in her moral self-esteem even when events disappoint her hopes. All of this applies to a man, too, but to a lesser degree. Woman's morality is the legislative principle of the family and the society of families. There is more possible suffering in her lot but also more nobility. Thus Rousseau makes freedom the continuing foundation of the family, and equality in free choice does not require the homogenization of unlike beings. Tocqueville, in his description of the relations between parents and children in America, shows how freedom and equality penetrate the entire family, changing its purposes, the character of the attachments within it, and its structure. Bonds of affection and gratitude take the place of those of authority, tradition, law, and convention. Tocqueville observes that American women have no sympathy with adulteresses, because they, unlike their European counterparts, cannot blame their marriages on unjust external force and hence have no excuse for being defeated by the tension between desire and duty. Equality, rightly understood, makes them moral beings.

And this is the important thing. The issue is not merely marriage but human freedom and morality itself. Sexual conduct is for Rousseau the crucial case proving whether or not human beings can convert natural freedom into moral freedom. Natural freedom means the absence of external impediments, particularly those provided by other human beings, to fulfilling one's desires. But these desires are not freely chosen. They happen to one. And in that sense one is as much a slave to natural lust as are brutes. Only if one can control those desires, not simply by other, more powerful desires but in the name of the good or the ideal, can one make the claim to specifically human dignity, which means autonomy or self-legislation, emancipated from God, nature, or the human law made by others, from heteronomy or alienation. In other words, is man capable of will and hence does he possess human dignity? Rousseau's definition of human freedom is obedience to a law one sets for oneself. With sex he tries to indicate how this is possible or to illustrate the formation of the will.

Autonomous will is, of course, empty. Its content comes from desire. It must choose to satisfy desire or deny it satisfaction. If one is to prove that it is really will, it must not be determined by anything other than the good itself. It must be able to motivate forgoing of satisfaction or happiness in the name of the good. But what is the good if it is not the satisfaction of desire? Sex provides the best case for seeing and solving the problem. Sex is simply natural lust. But out of it comes the need to live with other human beings and to make agreements with them. Sex, unlike hunger, generates ideal fantasies of virtue and fidelity. One can imagine what one and one's partner must be in order to satisfy and not do harm to one another. If one can be motivated by that ideal to control the sexuality out of which it comes, then one can be said to be exercising a control over oneself that is produced by oneself, to be living one's own ideal. The tension between duty and desire is imposed not from without by society but from within by desire, deriving the ideal from itself with the aid of a union of reason and feeling. This is a substantial account of the famous generalization or universalization of desire which constitutes morality. The promise made in marriage, which both parties presumably second with their sexual desire, must be able to survive the change in that desire. Otherwise the promise is nothing but animal sexual desire masquerading as morality in order to fulfill its end. Rousseau finds that sex is the only one of the natural desires that might possibly produce this conversion—truly pointed toward another, powerful, and capable of producing sublime objects. Experience of the heroism of lovers distinguishes sex from hunger as an ideal force. This is the natural way to love another as oneself.

Love is Rousseau's solution to the problem of establishing a nonmercenary morality within the context of rational liberalism. From this first obligation flow all the others—to children, to the civil society that protects the family. Modern regimes understand themselves to be founded by a contract. The contract as presented by its teachers is purely negative, joined in because, without the state's power, the life of natural freedom is too precarious. This is an unsociable sociability and one not sufficient to make the social contract sacred or to justify the sacrifice of life to it. No other contract carries with it the requirement that one die in fulfilling it. Naturally only the marriage contract is positive, made not only for the individual benefit of those who enter into it, and is felt to demand, in case of need, the supreme sacrifice. Rousseau makes the sexual contract into the essence of the social contract in order to provide society with a positive impulse. Marriage is the contract of contracts, and, if this one can be fulfilled in good faith, so can the others that can be made to be derivative from it. A family man can be said to be moral for good reason as an individual cannot, and marriage is something almost all men and women must face. It does not have the abstract character of modern politics, where moral obligation has no real contact with everyday life and concerns people one has never met. The pleasures and duties of marriage are truly lived.

The discussion of all this moved from the texts of moralists into its more proper place in nineteenth-century novels, so much of whose inspiration was provided by Rousseau. They were the true educators of the democratic taste, appealing to the imaginative and sensitive faculties that apprehend such truths. The interplay between man and woman and the effort to show forth their respective natures as they relate to one another were invested with a new seriousness. The fairest artistic genius dedicated itself to discerning and depicting the mode of being of men and women together; no more subtle, delicate, or profound elaboration of this theme can be imagined. Current moral indignation deprives us of this fertile source of insight into human nature. In it the true interest of life was the romantic, in the discovery of inclinations that lead to suitable marriage, as in Jane Austen, in stories about young men whose great passion for a woman reveals the dreariness of ambition in bourgeois social and political life, as in Stendhal. But above all and everywhere, adultery was the great theme. Not primarily because it was forbidden, shocking, and titillating for readers, although it was all of them. Adultery was the necessary question because it represented *the* test of human moral capacity, of the deepest commitment, of the wholeness or unity of man in the relation of his bodily pleasures to his tenderest and noblest spirituality, of the possible triumph of duty over desire. Marital fidelity after Rousseau was the core of the moral problem, the sacred, the social bond. The meaning of adultery, committing it or resisting it, is of the greatest interest to those who have put their eggs in the marital basket. Adultery in the romantic world is the equivalent of betrayal of one's country in the political world (the cases of Coriolanus and Alcibiades, for example). The artist allows the readers to apprehend the stakes in great choices. Adultery really concerned the metaphysical issue of human freedom and responsibility. This conviction is what animated the best novelists—Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina*, for instance—and gives gravity to works on themes that were formerly despised. When adultery lost its cosmic significance, novels about love lost theirs. The connection between aesthetics and morals, on which Rousseau and Kant so insisted, is nowhere else so clear.

To conclude on this question, Rousseau saw something miraculous in sex. Body can become spirit. Seminal effervescence becomes creativity in animating the imagination. He was among the earliest thinkers, if he was not himself the earliest, to see in this creativity, as opposed to reason, the specific difference of man. The beautiful object that solicits desire and leads it upward is the creation of man the artist. This beautiful ideal forms in turn a model of behavior with respect to itself which is the final cause of noble behavior. The work of art both imitates and encourages such behavior. The beautiful and the moral are inseparable. Rousseauan morals, aesthetics, and psychology are the grandest description of the sublime and sublimation in an egalitarian society that needs both while threatening both. We need him, if only for fear that we forget the very question.